

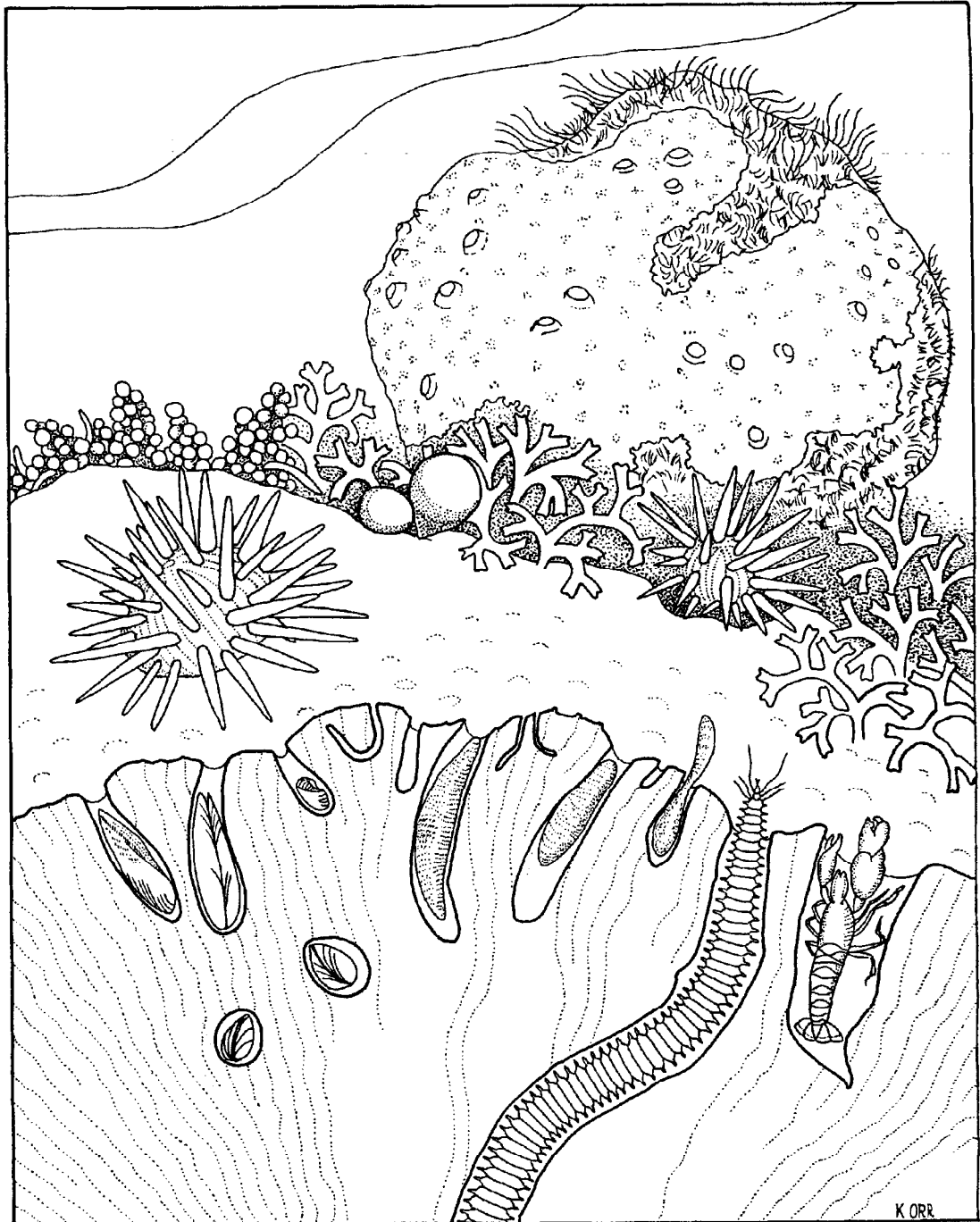
**Source:** **The Coral Reef Coloring Book** by Katherine Orr. © 1988 Katherine Orr. Stemmer House Publishers, Inc., Owings Mill, Maryland. Used with permission.

## 48. CAN A DAMAGED REEF RECOVER?

Certain snails, worms, and fish eat coral polyps. They create small dead spots on the living coral surface. On a healthy reef this is not a problem. The surrounding polyps can spread over these small spots and repair the damage. But large spots of dead coral cannot be repaired because the polyps grow more slowly than other creatures.

Algae and sponges settle on bare, hard surfaces and grow rapidly. They quickly cover the area and prevent new polyps from settling. Many boring animals also settle on these dead spots. Boring sponges, sea urchins, boring clams, snails and worms scrape holes for their homes in coral rock. These

animals weaken the coral. Eventually it will crumble. If corals are weakened by silt or pollution, they may never grow back. A damaged reef may take 20 or 50 years to recover.



**Correlation to National Standards from McREL ( <http://www.mcrel.org> ) :**

Life Sciences

5. Understands the structure and function of cells and organisms
6. Understands relationships among organisms and their physical environment